

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-16 (Canceled)

17. (Previously presented) A surface coated powdered manganese sulfide for use as a sinter additive, wherein the surface coat comprises at least one coating agent selected from the group consisting of an ester of an inorganic or organic acid, an oil, a low melting polymer, and a mono- or multi-functional aliphatic alcohol with 2 to 12 carbon atoms, wherein the coating agent is present in an amount of 0.01 to 10 wt.% relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide to thereby reduce moisture uptake and improve oxidation protection of the sinter additive.
18. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the powdered manganese sulfide has a particle size of 1 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .
19. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the powdered manganese sulfide has a particle size of 1 to 10  $\mu\text{m}$ .
20. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the low melting polymer has a melting point of less than 150°C and is a polyester, polyamide or a polyaliphatic compound.
21. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 18 wherein the low melting polymer has a melting point under 150°C and is a polyester, polyamide or a polyaliphatic compound.
22. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 19 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
23. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.

24. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 18 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
25. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 19 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
26. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 23 wherein the phosphoric acid ester is diphenylcresylphosphate or triphenylphosphate.
27. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 24 wherein the phosphoric acid ester is diphenylcresylphosphate or triphenylphosphate.
28. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 25 wherein the phosphoric acid ester is diphenylcresylphosphate or triphenylphosphate.
29. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the oil is selected from a paraffinic oil or silicon oil.
30. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 18 wherein the oil is selected from a paraffinic oil or silicon oil.
31. (Previously presented) The manganese sulfide according to claim 19 wherein the oil is selected from a paraffinic oil or silicon oil.
32. (Previously presented) A method of producing surface-modified manganese sulfide (MnS), comprising:  
  
providing powdered manganese sulfide;  
  
adding a coating agent to the manganese sulfide in an amount of 0.01 to 10 wt.% relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide to thereby coat the manganese sulfide;  
  
wherein the coating agent is selected from the group consisting of an ester of an inorganic or an organic acid, an oil, a low melting polymer, and a mono- to multi-functional aliphatic alcohol with 2 to 12 carbon atoms or mixtures thereof; and

wherein the mixture of the coating agent and the manganese sulfide is mixed for a period of time sufficient to ensure a homogeneous mixture.

33. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the manganese sulfide has a particle size from 1 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .
34. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the manganese sulfide has a particle size from 1 to 10  $\mu\text{m}$ .
35. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the coating agent is added in an amount of 0.01 to 5.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.
36. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 33 wherein the coating agent is added in an amount of 0.01 to 5.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.
37. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 34 wherein the coating agent is added in an amount of 0.01 to 5.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.
38. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the coating agent is added in an amount of 1.0 to 3.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.
39. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 33 wherein the coating agent is added in an amount of 1.0 to 3.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.
40. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 34 wherein the coating agent is added in an amount of 1.0 to 3.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.
41. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.

42. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 33 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
43. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 34 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
44. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 35 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
45. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 36 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
46. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 37 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
47. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 38 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
48. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 39 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
49. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 40 wherein the ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
50. (Previously presented) The method according to any one of claims 41-49, wherein the ester of the phosphoric acid is diphenylcresylphosphate or triphenylphosphate.
51. (Previously presented) A method of improving a compression characteristics of a powder mixture comprising a step of using the surface coated powdered manganese sulfide according to any one of claims 17 to 31 as an additive.
52. (Previously presented) A method of improving processability of a molded sintered article comprising a step of use of using the surface coated powdered manganese sulfide according to any one of claims 17 to 31 as an additive.

53. (Previously presented) A sinter powder comprising the surface coated powdered manganese sulfide according to any one of claims 17 to 31, and a metal powder, wherein the manganese sulfide is treated with the surface coat prior to addition to the metal powder.
54. (Previously presented) A method of producing a molded article, comprising  
providing the sinter powder according to claim 53;  
  
compressing the sinter powder in a sinter mold that has an inner shape corresponding to a final contour of a finished molded article;  
  
heating the compressed sinter powder to a temperature above an evaporation temperature of the coating agent, and optionally maintaining the compressed sinter powder at the temperature for a period of time sufficient to ensure complete evaporation of the coating agent;  
  
sintering the compressed sinter powder; and  
  
removing the molded article from the sinter mold.
55. (Previously presented) A molded article manufactured by the method according to claim 54.